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Forty-sixth session
Agenda items 19 and 98

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 3 December 1991 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text, in English and French, of a declaration of the European Community and its member States on the situation in East Timor, issued on 3 December 1991 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 19 and 98.

(Signed) Robert J. VAN SCHAIK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Declaration on the situation in East Timor, issued at Brussels on 3 December 1991 by the European Community

(Informal meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Egmont Palace, Brussels, 2 and 3 December 1991)

The Community and its member States reviewed the situation in East Timor in the light of the latest reporting available as well as the decisions of the Government of Indonesia to set up a commission to investigate the violent incidents of Dili that cost the life of many innocent and defenceless citizens.

They reiterate their condemnation of these unjustifiable actions by the armed forces of Indonesia.

The Community and its member States stressed once again the paramount importance they attached to the full respect of human rights as expressed, in particular, in the declaration of the European Council of Luxembourg on 25 and 26 June 1991.

They also stress, in this respect, the importance of the resolution and of the regulation adopted by the Development Council on human rights, democracy and development of 28 November 1991.

They call upon the Indonesian authorities to respond to the serious concerns expressed by the international community. They support the demands for a thorough and credible investigation by impartial and independent experts.

The Community and its member States will review the cooperation between the European Community and Indonesia in the light of the above-mentioned orientations and regulation, and taking into account the response of the Indonesian authorities.

The Community and its member States stress their support for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement of the East Timor issue, respecting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and taking into account the need to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the full respect of the legitimate interests and aspirations of the population of this territory.

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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991

Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/C.5/46/3 and Add.1-2). During its consideration of this report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 40/455 of 18 December 1985 and 45/248 A, section XIII, of 21 December 1990, the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/46/3) contains information on all expenditures by the United Nations for first-class travel and on the meetings attended by eminent persons for whom exceptions have been made for first-class travel. Section I of the report, i.e. paragraph 3 and table 1, relates to delegation travel; as indicated therein, a total of $117,420 was expended during the period from 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991 in respect of the entitlement of first-class accommodation by air to one representative of each Member State designated as a least developed country attending regular, special or emergency sessions of the General Assembly.

3. Section II of the Secretary-General's report (paras. 4-11 and tables 2 and 3), supported by annexes I to V, provides information on exceptions to the rules on standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General. As stated in paragraph 4 of the report, the Secretary-General has been authorized by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/214 to "exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis". Business travel may also be authorized by the Secretary-General in special circumstances. Factors

considered by the Secretary-General in granting exceptions are outlined in paragraph 5. In this connection, the Advisory Committee wishes to point out that, while authorizing exceptions for travel by a higher class on account of a medical condition, the duration of flight time should be also taken into account.

4. The Advisory Committee notes that for the period from 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991, the Secretary-General authorized 65 cases of first-class travel and 35 cases of business-class travel as an exception to the standards of accommodation; the total additional costs incurred as a result of these exceptions amounted to $100,477, which compares to a figure of $95,956 for the previous reporting period.

5. The Advisory Committee notes from tables 2 and 3 of the Secretary-General's report that exceptions granted for eminent persons account, in financial terms, for a sizeable proportion of the additional cost, both during the period from 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991 and during the preceding year. That being the case, the Committee trusts that care will be taken in granting exceptions for this reason and that criteria for this designation will be applied.

6. In so stating, the Advisory Committee emphasizes that it is not opposed, in principle, to the granting of exceptions; i.e. it recognizes fully that circumstances warranting such exceptions do exist. At the same time, it believes that the present system lacks the flexibility necessary to address various anomalies and inconsistencies which exist.

7. In the circumstances, the Advisory Committee believes that a comprehensive review of the existing system should be conducted by the Secretary-General. While the proposal contained in addendum 2 of the Secretary-General's report addresses one problem which has resulted in large part from the diminished quality of service in economy-class accommodation in recent years, the Committee believes that the Secretary-General should prepare a report which would enable the General Assembly to evaluate the entire system; the report would encompass all questions related to the travel of staff and representatives of Member States, including entitlements to first-class travel, with a view to formulating recommendations for a system which can be administered with flexibility and which eliminates existing anomalies. Moreover, that study, in the opinion of the Committee, should take into account practices elsewhere in the United Nations system with a view to achieving uniformity and consistency. It should also take into account all previous relevant reports and resolutions; in this connection, the Committee recalls the review of the Secretary-General on travel and related travel entitlements of representatives attending United Nations meetings (A/C.5/43/4 and Corr.1) and its related report A/43/7/Add.8. Although the Assembly, in section IX of its resolution 43/217, decided to defer action on the issues contained in the Secretary-General's report, the Committee believes that the information contained therein remains relevant.

8. The Advisory Committee also recalls that, as noted in paragraph 1 of A/C.5/46/3/Add.1, General Assembly resolution 45/248, section XIII, paragraph 3, requested the Secretary-General to review the rules and procedures for the payment by the Organization of travel expenses and/or subsistence allowance to members of certain organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, with a view to ensuring consistency in travel arrangements. Although the Secretary-General states in paragraph 4 of the same report that the Assembly's concern for consistency has been met through the issuance of revised rules for travel, the Committee is of the view that outstanding issues remain with regard to removing inconsistencies in the payment of subsistence allowance to members of certain organs and subsidiary bodies. In the Committee's view, a rational system for travel relates not only to the payment of travel expenses per se, but also to the related issue of subsistence allowance.

9. Bearing in mind its observations in the preceding paragraphs, the Advisory Committee, while not predisposed against the proposal of the Secretary-General in paragraph 9 of A/C.5/46/Add.2, recommends that no decision be taken at the current session of the General Assembly. Rather, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit the above-mentioned review/evaluation of the current system together with specific proposals. Should the Assembly endorse this recommendation, it would be the Advisory Committee's intention to submit its related observations and recommendations to the Assembly at the forty-seventh session.